

Dr. Ostherr kostherr@rice.edu
Office: Herring 313, x4318
Office hours: Tu 4-5 & Fri 1:30-2:30
[Schedule appointment here](#)

TA: Amy Bower afb6@rice.edu
Office hours: Wed 1-3
TA: Rowan Morar rtm8@rice.edu
Office hours: Mon 3-5

ENGL 273 MEDICINE & MEDIA (Spring 2021)
T/Th 9:40 - 11:00 am ONLINE ONLY

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course explores the role of imaging technologies in the practice of medicine, and the role of mass media in shaping our understandings of the body, health, and disease. The proliferation of screen technologies such as film, television, personal computers, smart phones, apps and video games has led researchers to identify media literacy as a critical component of both medical training and public health intervention. Simultaneously, healthcare is increasingly promoted and delivered through imaging technologies such as x-rays, ultrasound, MRI, CT, PET and through digital information and communication technologies such as telehealth. We will examine the historical foundations of these interrelated developments and students will develop a framework for better understanding the current and future uses of these tools. We will explore the ethical dimensions of visual images in a variety of medical contexts, including the patient narrative, the electronic medical record, and virtual health. We will explore how to translate patient data into visual images and stories, and how to make data meaningful through real-life contextual frames. Students will analyze their positions as media consumers and develop skills necessary for producing ethical images and information about bodies, health, and disease. We will blend critical analysis with production; class projects will include short video production and other creative projects that reinvent the personal health record. Guest lectures by clinician collaborators from the Texas Medical Center, the director of medical research for *Grey's Anatomy* and more. 3 credit hours.

Required texts:

*Sturken & Cartwright, *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* 3rd ed. (2017)

*Additional readings via Canvas

Course requirements:

1. **Participation:** Students will receive detailed instructions on a participation portfolio that will be due on the last day of class. Participation this semester will be assessed through a variety of activities that demonstrate that you have completed assigned readings before class, taken notes before and during class, and reflected on course materials after class. In addition, students will be expected to participate in breakout group discussions and contribute to collaborative google docs during class sessions. You are required to come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings and screenings, with a copy of the day's readings accessible, and you may be called upon to answer questions about these materials. Class participation provides the opportunity to practice speaking and persuasive skills, as well as the ability to listen and ask productive questions. What matters is the quality of one's contributions to the class discussion, not the quantity of times one speaks.
2. **Written Assignments:** Details on assignments will be distributed in class.
3. **See "Course Policies"** at end of syllabus for more on attendance, grading policy, letters of recommendation, and other course logistics.

DEADLINES

- **Due Mon. Feb. 22** Objectivity Paper (4-5 double-spaced pages) [25% of final grade]
- **Due Tues. March 9** Narrative Medicine Part 1 (500 words)
- **Due Mon. March 22** Narrative Medicine Part 2 (75-100 words)
- **Due Mon. April 12** Narrative Medicine Part 3 (Visualization)

- **Due Mon. April 19** Narrative Medicine Synthesis (5-7 pages) [30% of final grade, attach Narrative Medicine parts 1-3, but **do not** include them in 5-7 page count]
- **Due Fri. April 30** Participation Portfolio [20% of final grade]
- **Due Mon. May 10** Health Datafication Project [25% of final grade]

Learning Outcomes:

- Develop Close Reading, Critical Thinking, and Analytic Skills
- Build Historical, Interdisciplinary, and Contextual Knowledge
- Practice and Develop Critical Writing

COURSE SCHEDULE

SECTION I: FROM ANATOMICAL DISPLAY TO DATA VISUALIZATION

WEEK 1

T 1.26: Introduction & feedback about online learning & Create Poll Everywhere account

Th 1.28: Editorial, "[The COVID-19 infodemic](#)," *The Lancet* (July 17, 2020) & Brodwin, "[Externally polished, internally marginalized: Inside the fight over Pinterest's health misinformation policy](#)." *STAT* (Oct. 28, 2020) & Jennifer Manganello, Amy Bleakley & Patrick Schumacher (2020) "[Pandemics and PSAs: Rapidly Changing Information in a New Media Landscape](#)," *Health Communication*, 35:14, 1711-1714.

WEEK 2

T 2.2: Waldby, "Virtual Anatomy: From the Body in the Text to the Body on the Screen," *J of Med Hum* 21:2 (2000): 85-105 & Visible Human website view: "[From head to toe: an animated trip through the Visible Human male cryosections](#)" & Nuriddin et al., "[Reckoning with histories of medical racism and violence in the USA](#)," *The Lancet* 396 (10256): 949 – 951.

Th 2.4: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 9 "Scientific Looking, Looking at Science" pp. 347-384 & Rabin, "[Pulse Oximeter Devices Have Higher Error Rate in Black Patients](#)," *New York Times* (Dec. 22, 2020)
Optional: Sarah Lewis, "[The Racial Bias Built into Photography](#)," *New York Times* (April 25, 2019)

WEEK 3

T 2.9: Daston and Galison, "The Image of Objectivity," *Representations* 40 (1992): 81-123.

Optional: "[Science on Screen Presents Fantastic Voyage and Representing COVID-19](#)" (June 25, 2020)

Th 2.11: Tufte, *Visual Explanations*, Ch. 2 "Visual and Statistical Thinking: Displays of Evidence for Making Decisions" pp. 27-53 & **Guest lecture by Dr. Oliver Gaycken (University of Maryland)**

Optional: Powsner and Tufte, "Graphical Summary of Patient Status," *The Lancet* vol. 344, no. 8919 (1994): 386-389

Optional: Plaisant et al., "LifeLines: Visualizing Personal Histories," *ACM CHI '96 Conference Proc.* (1996): 221-227

Optional: Simon Rogers, "[John Snow's data journalism: the cholera map that changed the world](#)," *The Guardian* (March 15, 2013).

WEEK 4

T 2.16: Lerner, "The Perils of 'X-Ray Vision': How Radiographic Images Have Historically Influenced Perception," in *Persp. in Biology and Medicine* 35.3 (1992): 382-397 & Joyce, "The Body as Image: An Examination of the Economic and Political Dynamics of Magnetic Resonance Imaging and the Construction of Difference," in Clarke et al., *Biomedicalization* (2010): 197-217

W 2.17: No Scheduled Classes (no assignments can be due on this day)

Th 2.18: Cheng and Conca-Cheng, "[The Pandemics of Racism and COVID-19: Danger and Opportunity](#)," *Pediatrics* (Nov. 2020): 146 (5).

Optional: Ostherr, "[How Do We See COVID-19? Visual Iconographies of Racial Contagion](#)," *American Literature* (2020) 92 (4): 707–722.

****MON., FEB. 22: "OBJECTIVITY" PAPER DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS ****

SECTION II: ADVERTISING & BIG PHARMA

WEEK 5

T 2.23: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 1, "Images, Power and Politics" & Anderson, "[She Hunts Viral Rumors About Real Viruses](#)," *New York Times* (Oct. 13, 2020) & [Vaccine Confidence Project](#)

Th 2.25: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 4 "Realism and Perspective: From Renaissance Painting to Digital Media + Fies, "[Mom's Cancer](#)" (selections) + [Graphic Medicine: "COVID-19 Comics"](#) (selections)

M 3.1: No Scheduled Classes (no assignments can be due on this day)

WEEK 6

T 3.2: Screening: *Big Bucks, Big Pharma: Marketing Disease & Pushing Drugs* (Ridberg, 2006, 46 min.)

Th 3.4: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 7 "Brand Culture: The Images and Spaces of Consumption" & optional: Avorn et al., "Scientific versus Commercial Sources of Influence on the Prescribing Behavior of Physicians," *American Journal of Medicine* vol. 73 (1982): 4–8.

WEEK 7

T 3.9: Screening: *Made Over in America* (Wegenstein & Rhodes, 2007, 65 min.) & + Code Switch, "[Pretty Hurts](#)" (*NPR* Jan. 30, 2019).

*****TUES. MARCH 9: NARRATIVE MEDICINE PART 1 DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS**

Th 3.11: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 2 "Viewers Make Meaning" & Carlin et al., "[To see or not to see: a qualitative interview study of patients' views on their own diagnostic images](#)," *BMJ Open* 2014.

WEEK 8

T 3.16: No Scheduled Classes (no assignments can be due on this day)

Th 3.18: ASYNCHRONOUS CLASS: Screening: *DiAna's Hair Ego: AIDS Info Up Front* (Spiro, 1990, 29 min.) + Dorothy Nelkin, "AIDS and the News Media," *The Milbank Quarterly* 69 (1991): 293–307 + Editorial, "[The FDA and Me](#)" *Nature* 504, 7–8 (05 December 2013).

*****MON., MARCH 22: NARRATIVE MEDICINE PART 2 DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS**

SECTION III: MEDIATED MEDICAL NARRATIVES

WEEK 9

T 3.23: Charon, "At the Membranes of Care: Stories in Narrative Medicine," *Academic Medicine* 87, no. 3 (March 2012): 342–347 & Baruch, "Creative Writing as a Medical Instrument," *J. Med Hum* 34.4 (2013): 459–69 & Brown and Garden, "From Silence into Language: Questioning the Power of Physician Illness Narratives," *AMA Journal of Ethics* (May 2017), Vol. 19, No. 5: 501–507.

Th 3.25: Patel et al., "Patients' and Physicians' Understanding of Health and Biomedical Concepts: Relationship to the Design of EMR Systems," *Journal of Biomedical Informatics* 35 (2002): 8–16 & DesRoches CM, Salmi L. "Harnessing the Consumer Movement," *Ann Intern Med.*; 169:812–813.

F 3.26: No Scheduled Classes (no assignments can be due on this day)

WEEK 10

T 3.30: Screening: *All My Babies* (Stoney, 1953, 55 min.) & *Window Water Baby Moving* (Brakhage, 1962, 13 min.) & Ostherr, "[Can Movies Make Us Healthier?](#)" TEDx Houston (2013).

Th 4.1: [COVID Black](#) website & **Guest lecture by Dr. Kim Gallon (Purdue)**

WEEK 11

T 4.6: Ostherr, "[Movies have perpetuated racist ideas about illness for more than a century.](#)" (March 17, 2020) *The Washington Post* & Addo, "[Double pandemic: racial discrimination amid coronavirus disease 2019.](#)" *Social Sciences & Humanities Open* vol. 2,1 (2020): 1-4 & *Practices of Looking* Ch. 10, "The Global Flow of Visual Culture."

Th 4.8: No Scheduled Classes (no assignments can be due on this day)

*****MON., APRIL 12: NARRATIVE MEDICINE PART 3 DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS*****

WEEK 12

T 4.13: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 3, "Modernity: Spectatorship, the Gaze, and Power" & Leroy, "[The Fever of Images: Thermography, Sensuality and Care in Pandemic Times.](#)" in *Pandemic Media* (Meson Press, 2020)

Th 4.15: **Guest lecture by Meg Marinis & Screening:** *Grey's Anatomy* Season 2, episode 8, "Let It Be" (11/13/05) &/or Season 4, episode 13, "Piece of My Heart" (5/01/08) & Hether et al., "Entertainment-Education in a Media-Saturated Environment: Examining the Impact of Single & Multiple Exposures to Breast Cancer Storylines on Two Popular Medical Dramas," (2008) pp. 808-821 & Kaiser Family Foundation, "Television as a Health Educator: A Case Study of *Grey's Anatomy*" pp. 1-9 (2008) & **optional:** "[I've spent the past 9 months talking to healthcare workers as a reporter. 'Grey's Anatomy' gets the pandemic right.](#)" *Business Insider* (Jan. 2, 2021)

*****MON., APRIL 19: NARRATIVE MEDICINE SYNTHESIS DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS*****

SECTION IV: HEALTH DATAFICATION

WEEK 13

T 4.20: : Oliver et al., "[Mobile phone data for informing public health actions across the COVID-19 pandemic life cycle.](#)" (2020) *Science Advances* 6(23), & Van Dijck & Poell (2016) "[Understanding the promises and premises of online health platforms.](#)" *Big Data & Society.*

Th 4.22: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 6 "Media in Everyday Life" & Benjamin, "[Assessing risk, automating racism.](#)" *Science* Vol. 366, Issue 6464, (2019): 421-422.

WEEK 14

T 4.27: Petersen, et al. "The shifting politics of patient activism: From bio-sociality to bio-digital citizenship," *Health* (2018) & Lecher, "What happens when an algorithm cuts your health care," *The Verge* (March 21, 2018)

Th 4.29: *Practices of Looking* Ch. 8 “Postmodernism: Irony, Parody, and Pastiche” & Benjamin, “Racial Fictions, Biological Facts: Expanding the Sociological Imagination through Speculative Methods,” *Catalyst* (2016).

*****MON. MAY 10: HEALTH DATAFICATION PROJECT DUE BY 5PM VIA CANVAS *****